TO THE

KINGS moſt excellent MAJESTY,

TO THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL and TEMPORAL,

AND THE

COMMONS of GREAT BRITAIN,

To the RIGHT HONOURABLE THE

LORDS of the ADMIRALTY,

AND

Commiſſioners of his MAJESTY's

N A V Y.

Theſe Conſiderations on the PLEA of the SHIPWRIGHTS,

are moſt DUTIFULLY

and

RESPECTFULLY

ADDRESSED.

To the READER.

THE Author of the following Plea, is not ignorant that this ſubject has been already attempted by a SHIPWRIGHT, in a Pamphlet intitled IMPORTANT HINTS &c. printed in 1767; but he preſumes to think that Pamphlet to be very little to the purpoſe; deſcending to minute particulars which rather perplex his cauſe, and his reader, than offer any thing that is ſatisfactory: And in the main however well intended, appears rather a Libel on the Royal Dock-yards, than any way to the advantage of thoſe he profeſſes to defend.

But the Author of the PLEA now before you preſents his unprejudiced Reader with plain matters of Fact, avoiding all curious and uncertain calculations, he contents himſelf with ſhewing that the SHIPWRIGHTS are in great neceſſity; he offers plain and he hopes convincing reaſons why they ought to be heard, and redreſſed: gives ſuch anſwers to objections as to him

him ſeem very ſufficient; and points out a method to effect their Relief, which will be to the Honor and certain advantage of the Nation.

True it is, this is a Theme which merits greater abilities than the Author can pretend to, but ſuch as he poſſeſſes he freely offers to the Public, deſiring no other emolument than to be uſeful in an affair, ſo intereſting to his Country.

A PLEA in FAVOUR OF THE SHIPWRIGHTS, &c.

I AM about to plead for a numerous and moſt uſeful body of Men, who have not only been neglected, but from certain prejudices, as unreaſonable as they are groundleſs, have been treated with contempt and groſſly injured by the tongue of ſlander. That there are among them ſuch as deſerve all the obloquy that is caſt on the SHIPWRIGHTS in general, it would be ridiculous to deny; but that the whole, or even the twentieth part of them are thus criminal, will never be proved: And what body of Men, even the moſt reverend and reſpectable in theſe Kingdoms, would chuſe to be treated according to ſuch a ſevere LAW, as to ſuffer all the calumny in their united character, that might with juſtice be imputed to only a few Individuals? The maxims and perſons that would inflict ſuch puniſhments would be very unreaſonable, and the Community that would ſubmit to be tryed by them, muſt be very little acquainted with human Nature.

From this conſideration, and a tolerable acquaintance with the Subject, it is with pleaſure I ſtand forth in behalf of my clients, and addreſs the ſenſible part of this maritime Nation; who cannot have a more important cauſe come before them, than the marine branch of their defence; and of that branch, (I am bold to aſſert) not a more reſpectable part than the whole body of SHIPWRIGHTS; whoſe in-

genious minds and hands, have, in the late and preſent Reigns, covered the Ocean with as noble and as beautiful a Navy as imagination can paint; and at the ſame time, the moſt formidable, that the intrepid Souls of Engliſhmen could deſire.

Having thus beſpoke the attention of my readers, I ſhall proceed to give a brief Narrative of the SHIPWRIGHTS proceedings in order to obtain an addition to their pay.

On the concluſion of the late War, the SHIPWRIGHTS pay being reduced, as uſual (by ceaſing to work extra,) from twenty ſhillings to their bare pay of twelve ſhillings and ſix-pence per week; they ſoon found themſelves embarraſſed in their circumſtances. The War having been very expenſive, and a variety of Taxes impoſed, of courſe, raiſed the price of every neceſſary of Life; which, tho' the SHIPWRIGHTS felt in the War, yet, their pay being ſo good, they were no ſufferers by it: But their Wages being reduced, and Proviſions continuing at the ſame high price as before, thoſe that had families ſaw, with terror, Poverty, like an armed Man, making haſty ſtrides towards them; nor could all their œconomy or diligence prevent their feeling his dreadful power. This put them on the attempt to petition the Throne and Navy-board for redreſs, which was accordingly done, by Perſons ſent from the four eaſtern Yards, in March 1765. But by the miſmanagement of that affair, very little redreſs was obtained. Indeed, their payments ſince have been more regular, and they were ordered to work one Tide a day extra in the Summer Seaſon, which made an addition to their pay of ſeven-pence half-penny per Day. This was ſome relief to them; but this has been curtail'd from Year to Year, ſo that they have had it but four Months for each of

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the laſt two Years, and in one Year not two Months; which is ſuppoſed to be owing to the parſimony of our Parliament, who ſo ſtraiten the naval Officers by their grants, that they cannot aſſiſt the poor workmen as they otherwiſe would.

This relief being ſo precarious, and the value of money ſtill decreaſing, in reſpect to proviſions; ſo diſtreſſed the SHIPWRIGHTS of Plymouth yard (the place were proviſions had been moſt reaſonable) that even they, in June laſt, ſent circular letters to all his Majeſtys Deek-Yards, exhorting them to unite in order to Petition their Royal Maſter &c, for an increaſe of pay. Theſe letters were received by the ſeveral Yards, committees of the SHIPWRIGHTS were appointed, and two deputies were choſen and ſent to London from each Yard; who met on the 16th of July laſt, and waiting on Mr. Cockburne the late Comptroller of the Navy, he adviſed them not to carry their Petition to his Majeſty, but to reſt their caſe with the Admiralty and Navy boards; and gave them good encouragement to expect ſucceſs: Accordingly they did not wait on his Majeſty, but petitioned the honourable Admiralty and Navy boards on Friday the 20th of July: But the ſudden death of Mr. Cockburne, and the dreadful Fire in Portſmouth yard, they fear will have a malignant effect on their affairs. They have ſince waited on Hugh Palliſer Eſq; the new Comptroller, who promiſed them all the aſſiſtance in his power.

This is a conciſe narrative of the proceedings of the SHIPWRIGHTS ſince the concluſion of the late war; which have been carryed on by them with ſuch temper, and ſubmiſſion to their ſuperiors, as does honour to their underſtanding. I propoſe now to give a true copy of their petition to the honour-

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able Navy-board; as I intend to plead in their favour from the ſeveral articles in their petition; and then anſwer ſome objections that may be made againſt it.

To the Honourable the Principle OFFICERS and COMISSIONERS of his MAJESTY's Navy.

Honourable Gentlemen.

The Petition of the SHIPWRIGHTS in general, by Deputies from his MAJESTY's ſeveral Dock Yards,

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That your petitioners, preſſed by the neceſſities that they and their families have long laboured under, ariſing from the lowneſs of their wages, when compared with the exhorbitant price of every neceſſary of Life, are obliged to trouble your honours with their preſent diſtreſſes, and moſt dutyful requeſts.

To whom can your petitioners, in their diſtreſs, turn themſelves with greater propriety and hope of relief, than to your honours? whoſe ſuperior Station at the head of their affairs, and intimate acquaintance with his Majeſty's Dock-yards, ſo well enables you to compaſſionate them, and obtain a redreſs for them by an addition to their pay.

Your petitioners further preſume to remark to your honours, with all ſubmiſſion, that their buſineſs has within ſome few years been ſo greatly improved as to become, in ſome meaſure, an object of National

tional concern; which, with the dangers neceſſarily attending it, they humbly beg permiſſion to lay before your honourable board.

Your petitioners would not be unmindful, before your honours, of the indulgence that has been annually ſhewn them, and which they at preſent enjoy, by working extra in the ſummer Seaſon; but take this opportunity to expreſs their gratitude for ſuch favours: But as this proviſion is ſo limited and precarious, although they and their families thankfully receive it, yet they humbly hope that it is but an earneſt of ſome more permanent good towards them, that is ſtill reſiding in your honours breaſts.

Your petitioners need not inform your honours of the prodigious advance in the price of all proviſions and neceſſaries, ſince their Wages were laſt ſettled, which they find to be above a century ago; and conſequently how inadequate their Wages are to purchaſe barely the neceſſaries of life: This, has obliged all Artificers in private ſervices to advance the value of their labour, ſo that the loweſt Wages in private Dock-yards are above one third more than your petitioners receive in his Majeſty's Dock-yards. And their Officers will atteſt that they have, on all occaſions, exerted themſelves as his Majeſty's faithful Servants, and loyal Subjects.

Your petitioners are about to petition, in the ſame manner the honourable Admiralty board; and they earneſtly beſeech your honours not to look upon this as the voice of licentious Sedition, but of abſolute, yet humble neceſſity: And they beg the honourable board to make uſe of their high Stations, great Abilities, and extenſive Influence in their favour.

Your petitioners do not preſume to dictate to your honours the method of granting their requeſt, they

they humbly ſpread their great neceſſities before you, and dutifully wait on your honours wiſdom and goodneſs for a ſuitable redreſs.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The preceding petition for an increaſe of pay contains three grand reaſons in the SHIPWRIGHTS favour, viz. the increaſe in the price of all the neceſſaries of life. The great improvements made in their buſineſs. And the advanced wages given to the meaneſt workmen in private yards. This is the ſum of their petition; the propriety and energy of theſe reaſons I ſhall next attempt to ſhew.

That the price of proviſions have greatly encreaſed within this twenty years, no perſon in his ſenſes will deny; and increaſed, as moſt houſe-keepers find, in an alarming manner: For it is truly alarming to a Man whoſe weekly pay does not exceed twelve ſhillings and ſixpence, to find that this poor pittance has loſt one third of its value within a few years. His family encreaſing; his expences conſequently enlarging; at the ſame time his ſtipend decreaſing in value, and he ſo circumſtanced as not to be able to add any Thing to his income; is there an earthly evil that can more diſtreſs a thinking mind than this? A Man's Wife and Children, in this reſpect, are dearer to him than his own life; therefore, when they are deprived of common neceſſaries, it tears up his ſoul, and fills him with the keeneſt anguiſh.

This is the trying ſituation of ſuch as have familes; while the young Men finding their wages but juſt ſufficient to procure common neceſſaries, dare not think of marrying; for they daily ſee what difficulties

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those that marry are struggling with. Thus are two great evils introduced among them, and by which a Nation may be ruined, viz. A decrease among the inhabitants, and an increase of common prostitutes. For, young Men dreading marriage, (which should always be incouraged) continue single, and thus are almost useless to society; their Country has but barely their labour; they pay no taxes or rates; make little consumption; and, dying, leave no one, apparently, to fill their places; but remain blanks in society ever after.

But the decrease of population is not the only evil consequent on discouraging matrimony; for young Men feeling the common propensities of human nature, they of necessity must support a constant, fierce, and unnatural conflict with themselves; or plunge into licentiousness, by flying to the polluted bosom of a prostitute, or falling into the deeper guilt of adultery. Thus a Nation is not only weakned by depopulation, which is truly alarming; but also loaded with criminality, which is yet more dreadful.

It lies therefore on their superiors, in their several departments, to remove those evils, as they tender the welfare of their country, and their own posterity.

An increase of pay to the SHIPWRIGHTS, being such a numerous body, is therefore a necessary step; especially as they are as able and ingenious a set of Men, in general, as can be found in those Kingdoms,; and consequently, if properly encouraged, would present their country with a great number of robust and useful subjects.

Let any reasonable person compare 12s, 6d. with the various calls of a family, and he must allow, that a Man that brings up his family with it, in a place where there is no opportunity of making his little more, must, with his utmost œconomy, be much

ſtraitned: He muſt deny himſelf many neceſſaries; and muſt live ſo low as not to be able to go thro' his labour with proper ſpirit. It is true the SHIPWRIGHTS wages were ſettled by Parliament, and it is as true that when they were ſettled, they were a comfortable maintenance for a family; and even within our memories it was far from contemptible. But now it is greatly diminiſhed in value, and not worth half what it was originally.

The SHIPWRIGHTS of our Day, inſtead of being able to appear with that decent pride, and peculiar alertneſs, which diſtinguiſhed them in their better Days; are obliged to wear the mean garb of poverty, and carry in their countenances the intrenched marks of inward depreſſion: inſtead of engaging in their laborious employ with their uſual alacrity, and exerciſing the various poſtures and flexions of their bodies with their former eaſy addreſs; now they are obliged, for want of due nouriſhment, to bend under their labour, and paralitically tremble in the exertions of their ſtrength: Their cry therefore for an encreaſe of pay, is the voice of reaſon and neceſſity, and it peculiarly concerns their country to redreſs them.

Another, and very important, reaſon urged in the SHIPWRIGHTS petition for an encreaſe of pay is, the improvements made in their buſineſs; and this is ſo material a point, that (as they hint) it calls loudly for national regard; for it may with truth be aſſerted, that the improvements made in their buſineſs, with reſpect to Theory, Practice and Converſion, has advanced in gain to this Nation equal at leaſt to the loſs the SHIPWRIGHTS have ſuſtained in the diminiſhed value of their pay; ſo that there is a balance in favour of government, againſt theſe their worthy ſervants, equal to their full pay: For

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had the price of proviſions remained the ſame as when their wages were ſettled. The SHIPWRIGHTS are juſtly intitled to an advance in their wages, as a premium for their Genius in making ſuch uſeful improvements. This may ſeem exaggeration to ſome perſons, but muſt be ſo, only to thoſe that are quite ignorant of theſe naval affairs; or, who are ſtrongly prejudiced againſt the SHIPWRIGHTS: For the improvements I ſpeak of, are beheld with admiration by the old workmen in his Majeſty's Yards; and it is well known that a caſe muſt be very evident that induces old Men to ſpeak in favour of new methods: But this is ſo manifeſt that none will dare to contradict it.

The SHIPWRIGHT's Art is now admirably perfect, altho' in its nature it is moſt complex and intricate, yet Men have ariſen among them of ſuch deep penetration, and indefatigable induſtry, as to inveſtigate it to the niceſt preciſion; ſo that they may ſay, there is not much left for their ſucceſſors to find out. This has not been done by great Mathematicians communicating certain data to the SHIPWRIGHTS, and thus robbing them of the merit of the diſcovery; it has been accompliſhed by themſelves; Men who ſerved their apprenticeſhip in the yards, by indefatigable application to ſtudy, aſſiſted by daily experience, have nobly ſurmounted the prejudices of ancient and eſtabliſhed errors; inſtead of mere ſpeculative, theoretical propoſitions, they have founded this ingenious and uſeful Art upon the indiſputable principles of Mathematic truth, and confirmed them by practice; from which improvements the private yards have derived the greateſt advantage. And indeed, to ſee the various and multiform pieces of timber that compoſe a Ship's frame, taken from their ſcattered ſituation in

the dock-yard, and placed in their proper order, ſo as to throw on the ſight, the form of a 100 gun Ship &c. and with ſuch exactneſs as not to require one quarter of an inch to be taken off with the adze; this to a mind capable of reflection is at once an argument for the IMMORTAL REASON of MAN, and a ſtrong plea for the encouragement of thoſe ingenious Artiſts.

A few years ago theſe things were in embryo: a general uncertainty prevailed among the Artiſts, which had a bad influence on every other branch of the buſineſs, and eſpecially on convertion (which is uſing a piece of timber to the beſt advantage.) While the Artiſt was in doubt, it is reaſonable to imagine that he would chuſe to err on the moſt certain ſide, conſequently, would provide his timber large enough for an allowance; and when on the ſaw pit, he would mould his frame with too large a ſcantling, leſt when put together, his work ſhould not anſwer his intention, and thereby ſpoil the whole: Thus larger trees were uſed than was neceſſary, which increaſed the expence, and when converted on the pit; being moulded too large, ſpoiled the offal or waſte timber, which was a great loſs; and when it was faſtned in the frame, it required great labour and time to reduce it to its deſired form and dimenſions; which was another diſadvantage to the ſervice. But now, this part of the buſineſs, by the ingenuity of the SHIPWRIGHTS themſelves, is abſolutely ſettled, and accurately determined: all the old doubts are deſtroyed, and former perplexities unravelled: ſo that the excellent Artiſt of the preſent Day, chuſes his timber with a certain œconomy, and ſaws and prepares it with the utmoſt preciſion; which is a prodigious ſaving to the government; both in the immediate price of timber,

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and alſo in its converſion by the ſawyers; where the dimenſions of the principal piece being exactly moulded, the offal or waſte wood is converted inſtantly for inferior uſes: and when the principal pieces are faſtened in the Ship's frame, no labour or time is expended to reduce them to their proper ſcantling, when compared to the antient practice; but all is admirably true and compleat. And yet thoſe Artiſts, who, with inceſſant ſtudy and pains, carry on ſingly the work of two or more new Ships in the dock-yards; have no more than the ſcanty pittance of two ſhillings and ſix pence per Day, and a ſervant, which may be about a ſhilling more. This is a reproach to our government, as they are as uſeful a ſet of Men as any in the Kingdom; and if they leave the ſervice, and go abroad (as too many have done) are capable of doing us very eſſential miſchief.

But the improvements among the SHIPWRIGHTS are not confined to mere Theory, altho' that is of great moment, and makes a large ſaving to the government in a very material article viz. Oak Timber; which, it is to be feared, will be more precious than time or money in a few years: But their genius for improvements has extended itſelf to the practical part alſo. Here the old workmen wonder again, to behold with what readineſs and eaſe the moſt difficult part of workmanſhip is now done by the general part of the SHIPWRIGHTS.

The ſecrets of this kind that formerly lay locked up in a few ingenious breaſts, are now ſhared in common; and the moſt difficult parts of workmanſhip, are performed with amazing exactneſs. All this is brought about by their own ſagacity, and is a great ſaving of time and timber, for which they never had the ſmalleſt advantage. Thoſe who know any thing of a Ship, muſt believe that they are

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formed by almoſt an infinite variety of curved pieces of timber, which not only are diſſimilar from each other in their plane, or ſuperficial relation of length and breadth; but alſo in their depth or ſolid relation, they are equally as unlike each other; winding or twiſting into a thouſand different angles, or bevelings (as the SHIPWRIGHTS term them.) Theſe angles or bevelings in new Ships are given to the workmen by the Artiſt; but in repairing of Ships, the workman is obliged to find them out, and apply them himſelf: this uſed to perplex the SHIPWRIGHTS exceedingly in former Days; and ſome parts of the work was not executed, but with a great waſte of timber and loſs of time, and is ſtill very difficult to many: but in general, theſe lively and ingenious workmen ſcorning the trammels of their predeceſſors, have ſtruck into new methods, which at the ſame time as they are very curious, are alſo very profitable to all but themſelves. None can deny them the honor of theſe diſcoveries, but a reward for them they never had, nor can have until they obtain an addition to their pay.

Thus have I ſhewn the improvements made by the SHIPWRIGHTS in the Theory, Converſion and Practice of their buſineſs; but in a very brief manner; for it is impoſſible in the limits in which I have confined myſelf, to enumerate all the advantages that the ſervice receives from this article; which one would think is a ſufficient reaſon for an increaſe of their pay, even if Proviſions and Money were, as when their wages were laſt ſettled; but much more now, when theſe ingenious ſchemers are depreſſed by the iron hand of poverty, the value of money being ſo much decreaſed and the price of every article in life ſo exhorbitant. This conſideration loudly calls for the aſſiſtance of Government

ment to relieve them, and in ſo doing, I hope it plainly appears, that they will do no more for them than they have juſtly merited at their royal maſter's hand.

The third, and laſt, argument made uſe of by the SHIPWRIGHTS in their petition for an advance of wages is, the increaſe of pay in every branch of private ſervice, and eſpecially in private yards.

This is ſo notorious a fact that it cannot be denied. The common pay for a bare Day's work in private yards, has been 3s, 6d. for many years, beſides the allowance of their chips; which pay is above two thirds more than the SHIPWRIGHTS receive in his Majeſty's Dock-yards, and ſtay ſix or nine Months before they are paid, which greatly reduces their little wages.

What poſſible reaſon can be given for this great diſparity againſt his Majeſty's ſervants? but, that the SHIPWRIGHTS in private yards, finding themſelves pinched by the dearneſs of proviſions, inſiſted on an advance in their pay; and as it was a reaſonable demand, the Maſters have complied; while thoſe that belonged to the royal yards have been to much oppreſſed, or not properly attended to.

But this is comparing things with the leaſt advantage to my clients, for altho the common Day pay in private yards is but 3s, 6d. yet the workmen in thoſe yards generally work taſk or piece work, when they often double their Day pay, and hurt not themſelves with their labour: whereas the dock-yard SHIPWRIGHT has no poſſible means to enhance his pay, if he is ever ſo willing: but, be he a good or bad workman, he is bound down by the inflexible band of neceſſity; and all he can do is, as he knows his wages, to take care that his expence for food and raiment, do not exceed his income.

And

and this too is taſk enough. All Tradeſmen feel the neceſſity of the Times, and have accordingly raiſed their wages. Where is there a Tradeſman, out of the King's yards, whoſe pay is not much better than a SHIPWRIGHT's in the yard? A Taylor on his ſhop-board, without any hazard of health or limbs, without any wear of clothes or tools, without exhauſting his ſtrength or ſpirits will have 18s, or 20s. per Week; when a SHIPWRIGHT, ſerving the beſt of Maſters, and whoſe limbs and health are in continual danger, whoſe clothes and tools are very expenſive; and whoſe employ calls for all his ſtrength, and continually waſtes his ſpirits; is confined to the low pay of 12s, 6d. per Week, and that reduced nearly one twelfth part before he can get it. Surely this alſo is a very concluſive reaſon for the immediate advance of the SHIPWRIGHT's wages. Thus have I ſet forth the reaſons why the SHIPWRIGHTS in his Majeſty's dock-yards ought to have an increaſe of pay; next, as I promiſed, intend to examine the objections that have been, or may be oppoſed to them.

The firſt and principal objection againſt making an addition to the SHIPWRIGHTS pay, is, that "other Artificers in the dock-yards have the "ſame right and neceſſity, and that the Army and "Navy in general would alſo demand ſome advance "of pay." But in anſwer to this, let it be obſerved that altho' it is allowed that other Artificers in his Majeſty's yards have the ſame NECESSITY for an advance of wages, as the SHIPWRIGHTS; which ought to be attended to by their ſuperiors; yet it muſt be admitted, from the foregoing reaſons, that no other branch can claim the ſame RIGHT as the SHIPWRIGHTS. It is very far from my deſign in this work to ſerve the cauſe of my clients at the

expence

expence of any other body of Men. The cauſe of the SHIPWRIGHTS is as diſtinct in itſelf from others as a Ship from a Houſe: and if government thinks proper to attend to the reaſons they produce. and grant them a premium for their uſeful improvements, or enter into any contract with them for their Chips: I hope, nay am certain this cannot prejudice any other branch.

As to the right of any other Artificers in the dock-yards, which, can pretend to be of that importance to the Nation as the SHIPWRIGHTS? It is very true, that all are uſeful in their places, but the firſt place belongs to the SHIPWRIGHTS. The natural ſtrength of this Nation is its Navy: the builders, or firſt movers in our Navy are the SHIPWRIGHTS; they may be termed the PRIMUM MOBILE of our ſyſtem, with far more truth than this term was anciently uſed by Aſtronomers. They ſet the great wheels of commerce and war in motion, which move every ſubordinate power, and without which the pulſe of our civil polity would ſtand ſtill. By attending to and cheriſhing the SHIPWRIGHTS therefore we nouriſh our very heart; which in return for our care, drives life and health thro' every part of the body politic.

But their right for redreſs above others, appears in a ſtronger light, from the ſecond reaſon before advanced, viz. the improvements made by them in their buſineſs. Here their right riſes to a claim; in this view their petition is changed into a demand. It is impoſſible for any other branch to have the the leaſt pretence to ſhare in this part of their right. The improvements made by them are in ſuch eſſential articles of their buſineſs that no other artificer ever did, or can, intermeddle with: the merit, is alone due to them. Other Artificers have had a

Palladio,

Palladio, a Jones, and a Vanbrugh, to think and plan for them, in the magnificent buildings which have adorned our Land; but where is the great name that can deprive the SHIPWRIGHTS of any part of the honor they claim, of planning, building and decorating thoſe elegant and grand works of Architecture, thoſe almoſt miraculous Machines; that convey an idea of the glory of Britain to the the remoteſt parts of the World!

'Tis Britannia's voice that awes the world to peace.

It is true they have great names, as Artiſts, among them, who merit all the honors and emoluments which their Sovereign has confered on them. There are a S---e and a W----s; great and worthy names among the SHIPWRIGHTS. But they are only a part of this reſpectable body of men: they ſerved a regular apprenticeſhip for a title to it; and roſe by the gradual ſteps of merit to the exalted Station in which they now ſhine.

The abilities and merit of theſe gentlemen, therefore, and of many others that never received one ſhilling as a Premium; together with that of many ingenious workmen in the practical part of the buſineſs, muſt be conſidered in an aggregated view, as one common ſtock of ſterling worth belonging to the whole body of SHIPWRIGHTS.

If then this underſtanding Nation will attend to the plea of theſe their faithful and ingenious ſervants with due attention, there will be found no force in this objection; but it muſt be allowed that altho, neceſſity diſtreſſes all Artificers, yet the SHIPWRIGHTS have more in their favour, viz. a juſt right to be heard and diſtinguiſhed from others, by a maritime, Powerful, and generous people.

But with reſpect to Soldiers and Sailors being introduced in this diſpute, I imagine it to be done for want of due reflection in the Objectors; for there is little or no parity in reaſoning from them to SHIPWRIGHTS. They are not Artificers; in general, have no Home, or Family; and live without thoſe ſocial relations, or connections, which are ſo beneficial among the SHIPWRIGHTS. I do not mean to degrade them by this, but my deſign is to ſhew that theſe two very uſeful, and (to our Enemies) tremendous Bodies of britiſh Subjects, are uſeful only as ſuch; I mean in general. Whereas the SHIPWRIGHTS are uſeful not only as SHIPWRIGHTS, but alſo as Houſe-keepers, Fathers, Maſters of Families, and worthy Pariſhioners; many of them alſo are very intelligent and uſeful Members of Society. They pay Taxes and Rates; They conſume the Commodities of their Country to the advantage of the Community, and to the ſupport of their Fellow-Creatures.

The Soldier and Sailor, as private Men, may be made very uſeful in a few months from their entry into the Navy or Army: (nay the SHIPWRIGHTS themſelves made no deſpicable figure in the Field in the late war, but ſhewed a docility and dexterity in their exerciſe that gave much Satisfaction to many military gentlemen: and this alſo was obtained by no very frequent practice, for they ſtill carried on with ſpirit the work in the yards.) But the SHIPWRIGHTS as ſuch require ſeven years to arrive at any degree of perfection: Nor is there an inſtance, nor indeed is it poſſible, for a Soldier or Sailor to be of any uſe as a SHIPWRIGHT. Thus, altho' theſe two famous bodies of Men, the britiſh Soldiers and Sailors, merit all the honor and encouragement that it is poſſible for ſuch perſons to deſerve, yet they are ſo circum-

ſtanced as not to be ſo generally and ſo profitably uſeful both in war and peace, nor feel the pinching neceſſity the times ſo much as the SHIPWRIGHTS do: for as they, in general, are free from the incumbrance of a family, their wants lie in a ſmall compaſs; their neceſſities cannot be ſo great and conſequently they cannot merit the attention of the Nation on equal terms with the SHIPWRIGHTS. The Soldier being provided with Clothes, Lodging and other ſmall Neceſſaries; having little to do, and being inured to live hard, his feelings are not ſo quick, nor perhaps his appetite ſo keen, as the SHIPWRIGHTS, who daily labours hard: Beſides many of the Soldiers are Artificers, and if they have families, and feel themſelves in neceſſity, they generally have an opportunity to work and obtain a conſiderable addition to their pay.

The Sailor is ſtill better off, he is in no care for proviſion or lodgings, his clothes are trifling, and his waſhing of little expence; which articles, to a SHIPWRIGHT even when ſingle, will exceed 20l. a year, and his whole pay can amount to but 12l. 10s. more whereas the Sailor is ſure of upwards of 14l. clear money; ſo that the Sailor has in reality, more wages than any artificer in his Majeſty's yards; wherefore he has no reaſon, nor do any hear him complain.

From all which I think it is plain, that, if government will attend to the voice of reaſon and neceſſity, the SHIPWRIGHTS have a right to be attended to in the firſt place, by a relief of their neceſſiities.

Thus I hope this firſt and grand objection is ſufficiently refuted.

Another objection is made againſt the SHIPWRIGHTS from the third article of their petition,

and runs thus, ‘ If there is ſuch an advance of pay ‘ in private yards, and the SHIPWRIGHTS are ſo ‘ much better off there, how comes it to paſs ‘ that ſo many make intereſt to get into the King's ‘ yard?”

This objection will loſe all its force when the abilities and views of ſuch perſons as go from the Merchant's yards into his Majeſty's are taken into conſideration; and here it may ſafely be affirmed, that far the greateſt part of ſuch perſons are no workmen, but enter into the Dock-yards to learn their buſineſs, and then frequently leave them, or by their intereſt obtain indulgencies they have not merited.

It is very rarely ſeen, that a good hand leaves the Merchants for the King's ſervice, unleſs he has ſome ſiniſter views, from old Age or intereſt. But it is very common for the beſt hands to leave his Majeſty's yards, and be eagerly caught at and retained by private Maſters.

Another objection is laid againſt the SHIPWRIGHTS from the many indulgencies to workmen in his Majeſty's yards, both with reſpect to lameneſs ſickneſs, and bad weather; ſo that they ſeldom loſe any time, unleſs they will: which is ſaid to make their preſent wages nearly equal to the pay of private yards.

But this objection will alſo vaniſh if we only ſet againſt it the prompt payment in private yards.

Every SHIPWRIGHT in his Majeſty's yards that that takes up his money on uſury or by aſſignment (and it is almoſt impoſſible to avoid it) ſuffers a loſs of at leaſt 40s. a year, which is upwards of three weeks pay; but as a man muſt be peculiarly unfortunate, and the weather uncommonly bad, to loſe one fourteenth part of his time by rain, ſickneſs or wounds; ſo I hope it appears evident that, were their pay e-

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qual, the workman in the private ſervice has rather the ballance, but how much more ſo when he has two thirds more wages than the SHIPWRIGHT in the royal yards?

But it has been further objected. 'That altho' 'the pay of the SHIPWRIGHTS originally might 'be ſufficient to bring up a family very comfortably, 'yet the preſent workmen are better off than the 'former, for it was uſual to enter workmen on an 'Emergency only, and diſcharge them when done 'with, and on ſome occaſions they were obliged to 'impreſs Men for the yards and diſmiſs them again 'when their work was done. But now as the SHIP-'WRIGHTS are kept in conſtant pay, they ought 'to reſt well ſatisfied."

To this it may be replied in the language of a very wiſe Man on another ſubject, "when I became 'a Man I put away childiſh Things." Our Navy was then in its infancy, and the method of nurſing it was ſuitable to its weakneſs; to treat it in the ſame manner now in its maturity and perfect ſtate, would be as prepoſterous, as dangerous; and as contrary to the dictates of reaſon, as to the intereſt of the Nation, and the liberties of Engliſhmen. Theſe methods renewed; would ſerve the cauſe of our reſtleſs adverſaries moſt effectually.

Our Dock-yards would be filled with diſcontent: neglect, and confuſion. and our Navy be as contemptable as it now is (by more mature councels) become formidable and terrible.

As it is therefore, abſolutely neceſſary to keep the SHIPWRIGHTS in conſtant pay, it is as neceſſary that their pay ſhould be ſufficient to bring up a family; and then all the foregoing reaſons retain their full force. Let, then, all the obſolete methods of treating the royal Navy and thoſe that build it, be

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put away, and let the maturity and ſtrength of our Fleets be ſupported by rational, free, and liberal appointments; that at the ſame time as they declare the power, may alſo ſhew the wiſdom and munificence of the Engliſh Nation.

I will inſert but one objection more viz. appointments at preſent are very many and great, taxes are very heavy, it is a time of peace, means therefore ſhould be contrived to pay of our national debt, and not to increaſe it."

Very true, but when all the preceeding conſiderations are duly weighed, I hope it will appear abſolutely neceſſary that every other department of our defence ſhould ſtoop to the Navy: for it is abſurd for a maritime Nation, to make its naval intereſt ſubmit to the military or any other. If the Navy requires greater grants, and it is improper to lay more burdens on the people then, is apparently equitable, other leſs neceſſary branches ſhould be curtailed, that ſtrength may be given to the natural and moſt proper defence of the Kingdom: Inſtead of which we too much lament a contrary practice.

It is too evident our Navy is injured by the parſimony in the grants for its ſupport; altho' it is plain there are no lines, no ramparts, or batteries ſo much to be depended on, as our well man'd and appointed line of battle Ships.

Having thus given every reaſon for an advance of the SHIPWRIGHTS pay, and replyed to the objections that may be made againſt them. "It may now be inquired what will ſatisfy them? and how ſuch an important affair can be beſt accompliſhed."

And here I hope I ſhall not aſſume too much, when I attempt to ſpeak for ſo reſpectable a body, in ſuch a material point. I am the better able

to judge of the ſentiments of thoſe gentlemen, by having ſeen original letters from the deputies of the committees of each Dock-yard on this very article.

The ſum of their requiſitions is, that the government would be pleaſed to allow them 2s, 6d. a day as a bare days pay, and let them work extra as they do now in the ſummer ſeaſon, to keep the Navy in repair: and they on their part will chearfully give up their right to the chips.

Theſe are the conditions for which the deputies negotiated with the late comptroller, and which he was well pleaſed with, and ſaid might be granted to them; and this, in ſhort, inſtead of being an expence to government, will be a ſaving, as will appear I hope, on further conſideration.

The article of chips only has been for many years a ſtanding ſubject of ſcandal for the tongue of prejudice, to the diſhonour of his Majeſty's Dock-yards. The voice of the ignorant, and frequently of thoſe who ſhould know better, has been very ſevere againſt the SHIPWRIGHTS in this reſpect, and roundly condemned the whole, for the exceſſes of a very few.

That there has been exceſſes of this kind, and great ones too, cannot be denied: and it is to be feared there are ſtill ſome ſuch groſs humours in this excellent body.

This was too evident from the reception of the above propoſals in one of the Dock-yards, where ſome, though not above five or ſix, objected to 2s, 6d. a day, and affirmed five pence was not enough for the chips, which declaration is certainly falſe, and may be termed a confeſſion of their guilt.

But the SHIPWRIGHTS in general are unanimous to accept it, as it certainly is more than the chips are worth at preſent, altho' formerly, when they

they did not convert ſo nicely with the ſaw, the chips might be worth more.

It is indiſputable, that the SHIPWRIGHT's chips are his property. It is alſo certain that ſome chips are very valuable, not as chips, but as the timber might be turned into other uſes: which if it was done in the yards by depriving the workmen of it, would not be juſt, and indeed would be an unkind return for the ingenuity they have ſhewed in bringing their art to its preſent perfection: and yet it is bad œconomy to ſuffer ſuch uſeful timber to be mangled into the almoſt unprofitable dimenſion of chips. when it may be converted to many more valuable ſcantlings and ſervices.

The propoſal under conſideration provides againſt this evil, by granting the workmen a pecuniary conſideration, and taking his chips in lieu: which in many caſes will far exceed that conſideration, and thus turn the ballance in favour of the government, and give ſatisfaction to the workmen alſo.

This would be the caſe in a mere pecuniary or confined view; but if we enlarge our ideas, as it well becomes us on this ſubject, and conſider the united intereſt of the nation, the ballance will ſtill more preponderate in favour of the ſtate, by a large ſaving of oak timber: which conſideration ſhould have material attention paid to it in all our contrivances, for in vain are our Finances ſupplied and our Exchequer repleniſhed, if our oak timber (the ſinews of the Navy) fails us.

Another important conſideration follows on this ſcheme viz. the abſolute and only effectual method of preventing embezzlements of every kind, but eſpecially that infamous one of cutting up good timber into chips, which ſome few execrable characters

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will practice in ſpite of the utmoſt vigilence of Officers: here indeed, the advantage that will ariſe to government is unknown, but it certainly would be very conſiderable, becauſe a very few of this vile ſtamp in a Dock-yard, may do a great deal of miſchief; and for the mean purpoſe of a bundle of chips, that will at beſt make but a few trenails, may injure a piece of timber to the amount of ſome pounds.

But by what is now propoſed, this nefarious practice will be effectually prevented.

Thus the government will not only be ſerved, by its property being ſecured; but theſe rotten parts of the Dock-yards will be made whole, and prevented from infecting the riſing generation.

The honeſt and ſenſible part of thoſe workmen alſo will be eaſed of that load of reproach which by many perſons is indiſcriminately thrown on the whole body.

And as there are many chips made by SHIPWRIGHTS that can be only conſidered as fuel, theſe alſo will have their uſe at the boiling-kilns pitch-houſes &c. where there is a vaſt conſumption of broom, faggots, ſlabs, old timber &c. the purchaſe of which articles, by this plan will be prevented; or if the governments property already, may be put to more profitable ſervices, or ſold as the directors ſhall think proper.

And as to the expence of collecting the chips to the places of conſumption, there will not be ſo much time ſpent in this ſcheme, as there is in collecting broom, bavins, &c. to the ſame paces; and if the SHIPWRIGHTS time in which he is fitting and binding up his chips, be ſet againſt the time of the labourer that collects them, it will appear that the ballance is ſtill in favour of the

government,

government. Thus have I briefly ſtated this caſe, and truſt no reaſonable perſon can object to ſuch a ſalutary and beneficial ſcheme, both to the workmen and the ſervice. The chips of the SHIPWRIGHTS are their right, and muſt not be valued at leſs than threepence per Day; ſo that the government will have all the advantages ariſing from the improvement of timber that would have been cut into chips, and the abſolute ſecurity of its property from embezzlements, for two-pence per Day only.

For the whole number of SHIPWRIGHTS in his Majeſty's Dock-yards, including Officers and ſervants, is about 3046. The ſervants, I find, are in proportion as one to ſeven; and one year with another, cannot be allowed leſs than three-pence per Day, in their apprenticeſhip: Allowing therefore five-pence per Day to the Men, and three-pence to the Servants, the whole annual expence will amount to about 18,668 pounds: Three fifths of this ſum viz. 11,201 pounds is the workmen's due for their chips; and for the remaining 7,467 pounds per annum the ſtate is ſerved in an eſſential article, viz. the preſervation of Oak timber; the Artiſts and workmen are rewarded for their ingenuity, and relieved from their preſſing neceſſities, &c. every temptation to embezzlement is remov'd; the hated odium that has lain ſo long on his Majeſty's Dock-yards will be thoroughly wiped away; and every Officer relieved from the imputation of neglect of duty in this reſpect.

Thus noble, profitable, and ſalutary would this ſcheme prove to all parties; what then can prevent its being put into execution, but a prejudice in favour of a falſe œconomy? which it is hoped, for the Nations honor and intereſt, is now weakned; and that the eyes of men are at laſt opened to their true object viz. the encouragement and improvement of

the Navy, the natural branch of our defence.

Let me go one ſtep further. By what I can learn, the number of SHIPWRIGHTS is, to the number of other Artificers, Labourers &c. in his Majeſty's Dock-yards, nearly as three to four. Some of theſe have a right to their chips: But ſuppoſing them in general, to have an addition of two-pence per Day to their Pay; this would amount to the annual ſum of 10,556 pounds, which, added to the SHIPWRIGHTS 7,467 pounds, makes an annual expence of 18,023 pounds: For which ſum the government obtains certain great emoluments; rewards its ingenious and faithful ſervants; and above all, relieves the diſtreſſes of more than 7000 Men and their families.

Why ſhould any perſon object to this annual expence? Is it not for the intereſt of the Nation? Are our Laws to be as unalterable as the MEDES and PERSIANS? If the grants of the laſt Century are found inadequate to the neceſſities of this, wherefore are they not to be increaſed? The National appointments in former Reigns, with reſpect to the civil liſt, will not anſwer the demands of the preſent Royal Houſehold, but conſiderable additions are found neceſſary.

At the reſtoration (near the ſame time the SHIPWRIGHTS wages were ſettled) the Parliament, for the honor of the King and Kingdom, ſettled on King Charles the ſecond, the ſum of 200,000l. per ann. but we find by ſtatute 1ſt. of GEO. III. cap. 1 that his preſent Majeſty is allowed the ſum of 800,000 pounds, for the ſupport of the Houſehold, and the honor and dignity of the Crown, which may he long enjoy.

This ſum is four times greater than that granted to King Charles, even when his Parliament was

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moſt liberal to him: It is plain, therefore, that the lower arrangements of this Day muſt alſo want an augmentation &c.

The landed Men, Farmers &c. may indeed complain at ſuch diſburſments; but while their complaints are vented in the midſt of affluence and luxury, there is little cauſe to fear their being injured. Let them but reduce their Rents, and the price of their Commodities to the ſtandard of laſt Century; Artificers will then be content with their preſent wages. In fine, notwithſtanding all their complaints, the generality of this Nation were never more opulent or luxurious, conſequently never ſtood more in need of a ſtrong and powerful Fleet to defend them, while they are ſtretched on the down of indolence and eaſe: Why then ſhould they be unwilling to pay thoſe who contribute ſo materially to their ſafety?

Experience teſtifies that our fine Navy decays very faſt in our harbours; and unleſs they are well attended, by docking and repairing frequently, the teeth of Time and of the worms will make greater havock than the workmen can make good. Our navy is very large, and it is impoſſible to ſupport it, in a reſpectable ſtate, without great expenditures. Other grants may be neceſſary, but none in compariſon with thoſe of the Navy.

Before I conclude, I hope it will not be termed impertinence to hint at another practice in the Dock-yards that is a diſadvantage to the SHIPWRIGHTS, and to the ſervice in general: And this is allowing ſervants in the yards to the Carpenters of Ships in ordinary. This is a diſadvantage to the SHIPWRIGHTS, becauſe they always ſupply the vacancies that happen in the yards, by deaths &c. and thus leave no chance for a deſerving workman to have a ſervant in time of peace; conſequently he

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can have no reward for his ingenuity and diligence be he ever ſo worthy; which is very diſcouraging, and clips the wings of that laudable ambition which ſhould ever be cheriſhed in the royal Dock-yards.

This practice is alſo hurtful to the ſervice, as it is a nurſery for idle and unſkilful members of this body; for theſe ſervants have no Maſters to work with, and inſtruct them, but are left to their own genius, which ſeldom leads them right. The workmen alſo looking on them as an impoſition on the buſineſs, pay no regard to them, which makes them a very uſeleſs part of this body.

But if thoſe Carpenters who have a right to a ſervant in the yards, had inſtead of a ſervant, an adequate addition to their pay, I preſume they would be better ſatisfied; merit might be incouraged; and the ſervice be ſupplyed with better workmen; for then deſerving Men getting ſervants, as vacancies happen in the yards; they would take their own or other workmen's ſons, and having them ever under their inſpection, they would produce, in a few years, a number of valuable ſervants to the government, and members of ſociety.

One word to the SHIPWRIGHTS in general, and I have done. It lies on you, gentlemen, to perſevere as workmen, in diligence and reſpect to your Officers; avoiding every thing that may bring an imputation on your moſt excellent Art, and moſt IMPORTANT BRANCH of DEFENCE.

You, by petitioning, have taken a method that bids fair for ſucceſs: Wait with patience, and confidence in your ſuperiors, and all be well. The riots and ſtandings out (as they are termed) of your predeceſſors ought to be remembered by you with ſhame and abhorence. They were unworthy rational beings, and contrary to your priviledges as

Engliſhmen

Engliſhmen. They did, indeed, ſometimes prevail on their ſuperiors, but at the ſame time they granted their demands, they deſpiſed their underſtanding, and determined to take every method in their power to ſhew their contempt, and puniſh ſuch diſobedience: Accordingly at the concluſion of the wars, after ſuch illegal proceedings, multitudes were diſcharged from the Dock-yards, to the diſtreſs of many families; and ſometimes their reſentment fell on grey hairs. Theſe were the fruits of ſtandings out and thus provoking ſuperiors: And it will ever be a truth in Dock-yards, as well as in other things, that it is hard to kick againſt the pricks.

It is in vain to contend with thoſe that have ſo many ways to avenge themſelves.

But your peaceable, dutiful, and alert behaviour laſt war, has been rewarded with great indulgencies at the end of it; for the reduction of the yards was done with the compaſſion of Fathers, rather than with the authority of ſuperiors.

None but indifferent hands were diſcharged, and but few of them, when compared with former reductions: And to the laſting honor of your ſuperiors, they diſcharged no old Men: But on the contrary, a plan was concerted, and to the immortal Fame of our Sovereign, of its noble patron, and all your honorable ſuperiors, was carried into execution viz. to admit SHIPWRIGHTS and Caulkers to ſuperannuation together with their Quartermen.

The fruit of this benevolent ſcheme is now enjoyed by many old Men worn out in the ſervice.

This indulgence ſhould ſtrike the tongue of riot dumb for ever, and fire your whole body with a grateful ſenſe of this obligation to your gracious Sovereign, and all your ſuperiors. And there is no doubt but by a ſteady and patient perſeverance

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in the method you have taken, in your duty as workmen, and in confidence on the wiſdom and goodneſs of your ſuperiors, you will obtain your reaſonable requeſts, which will not only drive the gloom from your countenances, ſupply the wants of your familes, and ſpur you on to exert yourſelves in a grateful return; but will reflect never fading honor on its Patrons, and mark the time of their preſiding in your affairs, as the Æra of happineſs and honor to your reſpectable body.

FINIS.

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